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Religious Intertextuality in Ayman Al-Otoun's *His Name Is Ahmad*: Linguistic and Narrative Sacredness in Modern Arabic Fiction

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Abstract

Ayman Al-Otoun is a major contemporary Jordanian novelist whose fiction is marked by sustained engagement with Qur'anic language and religious discourse. This study argues that religious intertextuality in *His Name Is Ahmad* functions not as ornamental reference but as a form of narrative ethics that shapes moral resistance and readerly interpretation. Rather than offering a descriptive account of Qur'anic echoes, this study adopts a close-reading approach to examine how sacred discourse functions within the novel's narrative architecture. The analysis focuses on two interrelated dimensions: linguistic intertextuality, manifested in Qur'anic diction, devotional formulas, ritual terminology, and theophoric naming, and narrative intertextuality, expressed through prophetic stories, sacred history, and archetypal scriptural patterns. The findings demonstrate that religious intertextuality functions as a central narrative mechanism through which the novel articulates its ethical vision. Sacred discourse further emerges as an internally persuasive ethical language through which institutional authority and social power are critically evaluated without overt ideological confrontation. This study proposes a refined analytical model for examining the narrative productivity of sacred discourse in contemporary Arabic fiction. This study thus reaffirms the continuing analytical significance of Qur'anic intertexts for current debates at the intersection of religion, literature, and cultural critique.

Keywords: Ayman Al-Otoun; religious intertextuality; Qur'anic discourse; narrative ethics; linguistic intertextuality; Arabic fiction

1. Introduction

This paper argues that religious intertextuality in Ayman Al-Otoun's *His Name Is Ahmad* (Al-Otoun 2017) functions as a form of narrative ethics that reconfigures authority, justice, and moral agency in contemporary Arabic fiction. Ayman Ali Al-Otoun is widely recognized as a leading contemporary Jordanian novelist. Born in northern Jordan in 1972 and educated within Jordanian universities, Al-Otoun combines a scientific background with advanced linguistic training. He earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from the Jordan University of Science and Technology in 1997 and a second bachelor's degree in Arabic Language from Yarmouk University in 1999. He subsequently completed a master's degree in Arabic in 2004 and a Ph.D. in grammar in 2007 (Can 2024). This hybrid intellectual formation informs both the thematic concerns and stylistic texture of his literary work.



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Within contemporary Jordanian fiction, Al-Otoun occupies a notable position through his sustained integration of Qur'anic discourse into modern narrative form. While Jordanian fiction has increasingly engaged questions of identity, memory, and political experience, the narrative function of religious intertextuality within this national context remains insufficiently theorized. Within this literary horizon, *His Name Is Ahmad* acquires analytical significance. The novel thus stands at the intersection of Jordanian literary production and broader developments in contemporary Arabic fiction, where the narrative reactivation of sacred discourse has assumed growing structural importance.

Al-Otoun has emerged as a major literary voice attracting broad readership and sustained critical attention. His poetic and theatrical writings consistently display elevated diction and a marked engagement with cultural and religious heritage (Irhim 2020). This stylistic orientation—evident in ceremonious address, solemn invocations, and imagery drawn from sacred geography and classical Arabic eloquence—forms an important foundation for *His Name Is Ahmad*, where Qur'anic intertextuality functions as a central narrative strategy rather than an ornamental feature.

Thematically, Al-Otoun's works foreground patriotic commitment, attachment to place, and questions of national liberation and Arab unity (Wahbi 2024). Stylistically, his writing is distinguished by elevated diction, rhythmic prose, and the recurrent use of Qur'anic language and religious symbolism. Existing scholarship acknowledges the centrality of this tendency: Can (2024) notes the density of religious citation across his oeuvre, while Abdel-Daem (2021) observes that his prose "breathes the Qur'an." Taken together, these studies largely document the presence of religious references but do not conceptualize them as a structuring narrative and ethical system—an analytical gap this paper addresses.

A brief outline of *His Name Is Ahmad* clarifies the narrative context in which its religious intertextuality operates. The novel traces Ahmad's path from his rural upbringing in Ibdir, where memories of Palestine and loss shape his early life. It then turns to his military service and the cycles of displacement, interrogation, and imprisonment that define his adult life. A decisive turning point occurs during his service in the Baqoura region and leads to his long-term imprisonment. The narrative presents this period as a time of intellectual and spiritual development. The novel concludes with his release in 2017, and highlights concerns with identity, moral renewal, and endurance that shape the novel's intertextual logic.

Although existing scholarship acknowledges Al-Otoun's frequent use of Qur'anic language and prophetic narratives, it has yet to provide a systematic stylistic account of their narrative function. Prior studies typically identify religious references but rarely explain how they operate as an integrated intertextual system. This paper addresses that analytical gap by developing an integrated analytical framework that combines linguistic intertextuality, narrative intertextuality, and narrative ethics to demonstrate how religious intertextuality in *His Name Is Ahmad* functions as a form of ethical framework rather than a merely decorative or referential device. Unlike previous studies, which primarily identify religious references or discuss them thematically, the present study explains how sacred discourse operates as an integrated narrative system within the novel. Accordingly, this study examines how and why Qur'anic intertexts actively shape the novel's ethical and narrative structure.

Given the novel's dense layering of Qur'anic expressions, prophetic allusions, devotional terminology, and embedded sacred narratives, this study employs a close-reading methodology to analyze how these intertexts operate within the novel's narrative structure. The analytical framework draws on Genette's (1980) concept of transtextuality to explain the formal entry of Qur'anic language into the narrative. It also engages Barthes' (1977)

semiotic approach to show how meaning is produced through cultural codes. Together, these approaches clarify how religious intertextuality functions as a central narrative strategy in the novel.

2. Theoretical Framework: Literary and Religious Intertextuality

2.1. Literary Intertextuality

Literary intertextuality provides the central analytical lens through which this paper examines the narrative function of sacred discourse in *His Name Is Ahmad*. The term refers to the ways texts evoke, transform, or respond to earlier works, generating meaning through networks of textual relations rather than isolated authorship. The concept was first articulated within French structuralist and post-structuralist thought. It is most closely associated with Kristeva's reformulation of Bakhtinian dialogism and Barthes' emphasis on the textual production of meaning. Building on this lineage, Alaki rearticulates Kristeva's concept of intertextuality for contemporary Arabic literary criticism. Within this conceptual framework, Alaki describes intertextuality as a process in which "any text is the absorption and transformation of another," thereby situating Arabic narrative within a broader field of cultural, linguistic, and ideological exchange (Alaki 2024, pp. 108–9). The reader plays a central role in activating intertextual meaning. As Zaidan argues, interpretation depends on the reader's familiarity with prior texts and cultural references, enabling the recognition and decoding of intertextual links (Zaidan Abed 2021, p. 3). Narratological research similarly shows that intertextual signals—whether subtle or explicit—shape readers' expectations, guide thematic inference, and intensify emotional response (Allen 2011, p. 1). Intertextuality thus functions not only as a compositional strategy but also as a hermeneutic process through which meaning emerges in the act of reading.

Alaki further emphasizes that contemporary literature frequently employs intertextuality as a mode of critical "re-vision," whereby inherited narratives are adapted, re-contextualized, or subtly reworked to engage contemporary cultural and political concerns (Alaki 2024, p. 4). Such transformations presuppose a reader capable of perceiving both the underlying template and its narrative reconfiguration. Ababneh similarly highlights the methodological breadth of intertextuality, showing how it intersects with cultural memory, identity formation, and the circulation of meaning across literary traditions (Ababneh 2024, p. 217).

Bakhtin's distinction between authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourse is outlined in *The Dialogic Imagination*, particularly in the section where he defines authoritative discourse as "privileged language that approaches us from without... permitting no play with its framing context" and contrasts it with internally persuasive discourse, which is "retold in one's own words, with one's own accents and modifications" (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 342–43). This distinction is especially pertinent to the study of religious intertextuality, where sacred language may operate not as imposed doctrine but as a lived ethical resource. This application of Bakhtin nevertheless involves a theoretical tension, since Qur'anic discourse is traditionally associated with doctrinal authority rather than dialogic openness. However, the present study argues that literary recontextualization does not diminish the sacred status of Qur'anic language but transforms its narrative function from externally imposed authority into ethically internalized meaning. In *His Name Is Ahmad*, Qur'anic intertexts function decisively as internally persuasive discourse, shaping moral judgment and forms of resistance from within the protagonist's consciousness rather than through external ideological assertion.

In sum, literary intertextuality establishes the primary analytical framework for examining how *His Name Is Ahmad* generates meaning through sustained engagement with

prior discourses. This analysis clarifies the stylistic and structural mechanisms through which the novel constructs its ethical vision. It examines the use of sacred diction, narrative allusion, and scriptural patterns.

2.2. Religious Intertextuality

Religious intertextuality constitutes the central analytical focus of this study, examining how literary texts mobilize sacred scripture, theological concepts, and ritual discourse to generate culturally grounded meaning. Unlike secular intertextuality, religious intertexts carry heightened semantic density, as scriptural language emerges from long-standing traditions of interpretation, communal practice, and ethical authority. As Hassan observes, sacred discourse possesses “high intertextual density” because its vocabulary and imagery remain inseparable from inherited moral frameworks and collective belief systems (Hassan 2025, pp. 63–64). When such discourse enters the narrative world of *His Name Is Ahmad*, it activates not only textual memory but also a structured ethical horizon that shapes readerly interpretation.

Recent scholarship has challenged the view that religious intertextuality serves primarily as a marker of piety, ornamentation, or cultural inheritance. Hoda El Shakry argues that Qur’anic intertextuality functions as an *intrinsically critical practice*, in which ethical formation, esthetic form, and critique are inseparable (El Shakry 2020, p. 15). From this perspective, Qur’anic discourse does not suspend critical engagement; rather, it reconfigures critical engagement within a sacred moral horizon, enabling ethical reflection on power, injustice, and authority without recourse to overt ideological confrontation. Religious intertextuality thus operates as a mode of narrative ethics, shaping moral judgment within culturally authoritative frameworks.

Recent scholarship further shows that religious intertextuality operates through multiple channels, including direct citation, metaphorical refiguration, ritual symbolism, lexical selection, and naming practices. Sarajkić conceptualizes this process as “narrative resonance,” whereby scriptural echoes imbue fictional events with added ethical and emotional weight (Sarajkić 2022, p. 14). Through such resonance, individual experience is aligned with archetypal moral narratives, guiding readers’ ethical evaluation and situating personal conflict within broader spiritual paradigms (Hassan 2025, p. 68).

Because religious intertexts rely decisively on culturally shared textual memory, their communicative force depends on a community of interpretation shaped by scripture and ritual practice. In cross-cultural contexts, this reliance introduces additional interpretive complexity. Muhammed and Al-Qazaz note that scriptural echoes often resist straightforward translation, as their ethical and theological implications are embedded in communal knowledge rather than explicit textual markers (Muhammed and Al-Qazaz 2024, p. 81). Religious intertextuality is therefore fundamentally relational, presupposing a readerly competence grounded in familiarity with sacred discourse (Naimat et al. 2025, p. 3). While the present study is confined to Arabic-speaking readers embedded in Islamic textual culture, it acknowledges that religious intertextuality may operate through different mechanisms among non-Arabic-speaking Muslim readers and in translated contexts. Investigating how Qur’anic resonance is mediated beyond the Arabic linguistic sphere—through translation, paraphrase, or ritual familiarity—remains an important avenue for future research.

Within literary theory, religious intertextuality may be understood as a specific manifestation of the broader intertextual principle articulated by Alaki, who described texts as “mosaics of quotations” generated through transformation rather than originality (Alaki 2024, p. 109). Genette’s taxonomy of transtextual relations—particularly allusion and hypertextuality—offers a structural framework for analyzing how sacred texts are re-

activated within literary narratives (Genette 1997, p. 2). What distinguishes religious intertextuality, however, is its ethical charge: sacred references do not merely enrich meaning but authorize moral evaluation and implicit critique. This authorization operates by re-locating narrative judgment into a culturally sanctified discursive space: when Qur'anic diction or prophetic paradigms are embedded in the fictional voice, the evaluative force of the narrative is no longer perceived as simply personal or ideological but as grounded in a shared sacred moral repertoire. In this way, ethical reflection is framed not as an external authorial stance but as an internally legitimized mode of judgment articulated through inherited religious language.

This framework guides my reading of *His Name Is Ahmad*. Qur'anic diction, prophetic narratives, ritual memory, and sacred naming function as narrative resources rather than ornamental references. Religious intertextuality operates as a narrative mechanism, an ethical language, and a culturally grounded mode of critique. The following analysis shows how these intertexts are mobilized and why they assume central narrative significance.

3. Literature Review

This section reviews key studies on intertextuality in Arabic literature, with particular attention to scholarship on Qur'anic allusion, religious symbolism, and sacred language in narrative prose. Although existing research has examined intertextuality from stylistic, ideological, and cultural perspectives, it has not conceptualized religious intertextuality as a narrative and stylistic mechanism in contemporary Arabic fiction. This analytical gap frames the focus of the present study.

3.1. Scholarship on Ayman Al-Otoum

Scholarship on Ayman Al-Otoum's narrative works has largely focused on thematic concerns such as imprisonment and nationalism. Far less attention, however, has been paid to the stylistic mechanisms through which these themes are constructed within the narrative. The role of religious intertextuality as a narrative strategy remains largely unexplored. This imbalance points to a significant gap in the literature.

Among studies that engage religious references in Al-Otoum's fiction, Abdel-Daem's (2021) master's thesis, "Prison Literature in Ayman Al-Otoum through His Two Novels: They Hear Her Whisper and O Prisoner, My Companion," is particularly relevant. Abdel-Daem identifies Qur'anic phrases and prophetic allusions in the speech of imprisoned characters and characterizes Al-Otoum's language as one that "breathes the Qur'an." However, her analysis treats these intertexts primarily as expressive or devotional features without examining their structural role in shaping narrative progression, character psychology, or symbolic coherence.

Similarly, Abbas (2024), in "The Impact of Religious Discourse in Ayman Al-Otoum's Novels," situates Qur'anic and prophetic references within a broader framework of religious discourse. However, the study primarily documents the presence of sacred vocabulary and imagery. It does not provide a sustained analysis of their stylistic or narratological functions. This limitation further underscores the need for a systematic examination of religious intertextuality at the level of narrative form.

3.2. Broader Intertextuality Scholarship in Arabic Studies

Beyond studies devoted specifically to Al-Otoum, a growing body of scholarship has examined Qur'anic language and religious symbolism in modern Arabic literature more broadly. These studies offer valuable theoretical insights but typically treat intertextual references as isolated phenomena, rather than as integrated narrative systems. For example, Can (2024) notes Al-Otoum's elevated linguistic register and frequent reliance on sacred

diction, while Wahbi (2024) emphasizes his engagement with Arab and Islamic identity. Although these observations provide important contextual grounding, they do not explain how intertextual practices function structurally within the narrative or why they are strategically mobilized at specific moments.

Other works on religious intertextuality in Arabic literature, such as those by Aweida (2025), Muhammed and Al-Qazaz (2024), and Naimat et al. (2025), have developed analytical tools for examining sacred language, ritual imagery, and scriptural memory. Yet these studies do not engage directly with *His Name Is Ahmad*. Nor do they explain how religious intertextuality operates as a cohesive stylistic and narrative strategy in Al-Otoun's fiction. This gap confirms the need for the present focused analysis.

3.3. Identified Research Gap

Collectively, existing scholarship acknowledges the presence of religious language and Qur'anic reference in Al-Otoun's fiction. However, it rarely examines these materials through systematic stylistic or narratological analysis. Prior studies tend to identify intertexts descriptively without classifying them systematically or explaining how they function as narrative mechanisms shaping meaning.

This study addresses that gap by (1) identifying forms of religious intertextuality in *His Name Is Ahmad*; (2) classifying them into linguistic and narrative types; and (3) demonstrating how these intertexts structure the novel's ethical vision, narrative architecture, and modes of critique.

3.4. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, inductive methodology grounded in close textual analysis. Rather than merely identifying the presence of religious intertextuality, this study explicitly examines how these intertexts are strategically mobilized and why they assume structural significance within *His Name Is Ahmad*. Central to this approach is the argument that religious intertextuality functions not only as a cultural or devotional resource but also as a mode of ethical critique through which authority, institutional power, and social norms are implicitly interrogated. Given the novel's density of cultural, historical, and religious references, close textual analysis offers the most effective means of identifying intertextual patterns and assessing their stylistic and functional operations. The methodological process unfolds in two clearly defined stages. As with all close-reading approaches, the analysis remains interpretive, in line with established close-reading methodologies in literary analysis. It is grounded in sustained textual engagement with the text rather than quantifiable measurement.

3.4.1. Stage One: Comprehensive Close Reading and Data Collection

The first stage involved a line-by-line reading of *His Name Is Ahmad* to identify textual units containing explicit or implicit forms of religious intertextuality, including Qur'anic diction, devotional expressions, ritual terminology, sacred names, and scriptural allusions. I annotated each relevant passage, with particular attention to moments of crisis, imprisonment, introspection, and moral conflict, as such contexts frequently activate intertextual resources within the protagonist's consciousness.

3.4.2. Stage Two: Classification and Functional Analysis

In the second stage, the collected intertexts were systematically classified into two principal analytical models:

1. Linguistic intertextuality, comprising Qur'anic diction, sacred formulas, devotional vocabulary, and the semantic strategy of naming.

2. Narrative intertextuality, encompassing embedded prophetic stories, historical references, ethical maxims, and parallels to scriptural narrative structures.

After classification, each intertextual unit was analyzed in its narrative context. The discussion then considers how these intertexts function within the narrative. The analysis examines the contribution of religious intertexts to:

- The psychological and ethical formation of the protagonist;
- Thematic coherence and symbolic density;
- Narrative progression and structural design;
- The construction of sacred atmosphere and cultural memory;
- The shaping of readers' interpretive expectations and emotional engagement;
- The articulation of ethical critique, through which institutional authority and social norms are implicitly evaluated and contested within a sacred moral register.

Emphasis is placed on examining how religious intertextuality enables forms of critique embedded within a sacred ethical register. Rather than articulating overt political opposition, the novel deploys Qur'anic language, prophetic narratives, and ritual memory to reframe experiences of injustice, coercion, and institutional failure within morally authoritative frameworks. In this sense, religious intertextuality operates as a mediating discourse that allows the narrative to critique authority and social structures indirectly, preserving ethical legitimacy while avoiding ideological polemic.

While *His Name Is Ahmad* is frequently associated with prison literature and political discourse, the present study does not undertake a thematic or historical analysis of incarceration or state politics as such. Instead, it focuses on religious intertextuality as a stylistic and narrative strategy through which ethical judgment, resistance, and critique are articulated. Political meanings are therefore examined as effects of intertextual deployment, not as independent analytical objects.

4. Analysis and Discussion

This section presents a focused analysis of the religious intertextuality that structures *His Name Is Ahmad*, concentrating on two principal modes through which sacred and cultural references enter the narrative: linguistic intertextuality and narrative intertextuality. Rather than merely identifying the presence of religious intertexts, the analysis explains *why* these intertexts are strategically mobilized and *how* they function esthetically, ethically, and psychologically within the narrative.

Structuring the discussion in this way clarifies how the novel's religious texture operates simultaneously at the levels of diction and narrative design. The novel does not invoke religious symbols decoratively; rather, it constructs its semantic and narrative world through sustained engagement with sacred discourse.

Accordingly, the discussion begins with an examination of linguistic intertextuality, including religious terminology, Qur'anic diction, and onomastic patterns, before turning to narrative intertextuality, where scriptural stories, figures, and archetypal patterns are embedded in the narrative, shaping its ethical and emotional logic.

4.1. Linguistic Intertextuality

Linguistic intertextuality in *His Name Is Ahmad* emerges through a deliberate and layered deployment of religious vocabulary, Qur'anic diction, invocatory formulas, and semantically charged names that collectively shape the text's sacred atmosphere. At this level, intertextuality functions not as ornamentation but as a structural mechanism that guides interpretation and encodes religious symbolism. This aligns with scholarly observations that linguistic intertextuality often forms a "semantic interface between sacred discourse and narrative imagination" (Aweida 2025, p. 3; Alkier 2025, p. 2).

Al-Otoum's reliance on Qur'anic lexical items and culturally embedded idioms reflects what Aweida describes as "scripturalized language" — diction infused with theological memory and communal resonance (Aweida 2025, p. 2). These linguistic traces reveal key dimensions of the protagonist's spiritual consciousness, reinforce the narrative's moral landscape, and construct a culturally saturated narrative voice (Hassan 2025, p. 67). The following analysis examines these markers as intertextual nodes that deepen the novel's religious and semantic texture.

4.1.1. Titles as Paratextual Intertexts

This section reads the novel's titles as paratexts that activate religious intertextuality. By drawing on Qur'anic language and familiar religious phrasing, the titles guide the reader toward the novel's ethical stakes from the outset.

Titles in literary narratives function as crucial paratextual devices that frame the reader's approach long before the story unfolds. This framing function is not confined to the pre-reading moment; rather, the title continues to operate dynamically throughout the reading process, being retrospectively reinterpreted considering unfolding events and reactivated at moments of narrative culmination. Genette's classification of the title as a "threshold" text underscores this interpretive function (Genette 1997, p. 2). Recent scholarship further shows that titles can activate "linguistic schemata" that predispose thematic understanding by signaling genre, cultural scripts, or intertextual frameworks (Nord 2010). Empirical studies likewise demonstrate that metaphorical or allusive titles heighten curiosity and elicit deeper semantic processing (Jacobs 2015, p. 144).

Thus, titles carry dense symbolic weight: they designate subject matter, evoke thematic concerns, and activate intertextual associations that orient readers' expectations from the outset. Because interpretive processes begin the moment a title is encountered, titling becomes a strategic site where authors condense narrative intention and invoke culturally coded language (Alblooshi and Alasfour 2025, p. 2).

The interpretive significance of titles becomes even more pronounced in cross-cultural contexts, where they guide readers' expectations and activate culturally coded frames of reference (Alblooshi and Alasfour 2025, p. 5). Titles thus function not as superficial labels but as strategic paratextual devices central to narrative architecture.

4.1.2. Qur'anic Diction and Sacred Expressions

The novel's title and chapter headings exemplify what Al-Kharabsheh terms as "lexical intertextual anchoring" — the embedding of Qur'anic diction in core religious themes (Al-Kharabsheh 2017, p. 195). The novel's title, *His Name Is Ahmad*, directly invokes Qur'an 61:6 ("his name is Ahmad"), a verse imbued with profound theological resonance. Scholars note that Qur'anic names serve as "semantic carriers of prophetic typology" in Arabic narratives. Through this invocation, the protagonist's identity is tethered to a prophetic lineage, saturating the narrative with inherited meaning.

Additional examples appear in chapter titles derived from Qur'anic verses. One chapter title echoes Qur'an 10:35 ("the Truth is more worthy to be followed"), exemplifying what Muhammed and Al-Qazaz call "semantic Qur'anism," the embedding of Qur'anic phrasing to assert moral claims (Muhammed and Al-Qazaz 2024, p. 79). Here, the chapter's subject is framed as embodying *al-haqq* ("truth"), a concept that carries normative weight in Islamic theology.

Another chapter title—"How could God abandon a servant who knocks at His door?"—draws on deeply rooted devotional vocabulary. This rhetorical question mirrors the Qur'anic motif of divine responsiveness, recalling Qur'an 10:89. Classical Arabic rhetoric identifies such an interrogative form as *istifhām taqrīrī*, or the interrogative of

affirmation. Scholars of sacred language note that such constructions merge theological assertion with narrative affect (Aweida 2025, p. 22; Muhammed and Al-Qazaz 2024, p. 80). Through this strategy, the text mobilizes central Islamic principles to structure the reader's interpretive horizon.

Chapter titles in the novel not only activate Qur'anic memory but also articulate implicit responses to moments of collective vulnerability. For example, the chapter title "Jordan has a Lord who protects it" recalls the legendary utterance of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib during the Year of the Elephant. References to early Islamic sacred history function as "cultural-memory touchstones" that activate communal religious identity. The title situates contemporary national sentiment within a sacred historical frame, activating collective religious memory and symbolically implying divine guardianship, in a manner consistent with the persuasive and ethically legitimizing function of religious intertextuality (Naimat et al. 2025, pp. 197–99).

Beyond its symbolic and devotional resonance, this title also reveals why religious intertextuality is mobilized at this juncture of the narrative. The invocation of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's declaration—"the House has a Lord who protects it"—historically emerges in moments of human vulnerability and political incapacity. In the novel's context, the title subtly acknowledges national fragility in the face of external threat, while redirecting trust away from institutional power toward divine guardianship. Religious intertextuality thus functions as a coded mode of political commentary. It reassures the collective conscience while implicitly exposing the limits of worldly authority, enabling critique to operate within a sacred ethical register rather than through overt political confrontation. Crucially, this critique does not solidify into a fixed political allegory; instead, it remains embedded in the protagonist's lived ethical consciousness, operating as an internally persuasive moral orientation rather than an explicit ideological program.

4.1.3. Naming as Intertextual Strategy

In the novel, names function as intertextual cues that recall religious heritage and activate culturally sedimented ethical associations within the reader's interpretive horizon without predetermining or fixing a character's moral identity. The protagonist's name, Ahmad—one of the names of the Prophet Muhammad—thus carries strong religious resonance, not as an inherent marker of sanctity, but as a trigger for historically layered symbolic memory. Literary linguists note that sacred names function as culturally charged units that invite ethical and thematic inference rather than impose fixed meaning (Ainiala and Östman 2017, p. 4).

In this sense, religious names such as *Ahmad* or *Muhammad* do not confer inherently sacred authority upon their bearers; rather, they activate inherited semantic horizons within the reader's cultural repertoire. The name recalls a religious past and opens a field of ethical expectation, leaving its realization to narrative development. Throughout the novel, Ahmad's endurance in the face of hardship, his reluctance to claim personal merit, and his habitual orientation toward prayer and moral responsibility gradually *actualize*—but do not automatically derive from—the intertextual resonance of his name. Meaning thus emerges dialogically through conduct and context, aligning with Bakhtin's notion of internally persuasive discourse rather than with a deterministic semiotics of naming.

This strategy extends to the naming of Ahmad's children—*Saif al-Dīn*, *Nūr al-Dīn*, and *Batūl*—which reflects long-standing Islamic theophoric practices. Such names encode religious values and sustain communal memory, embedding characters within an Islamic ethical lexicon without reducing them to symbolic abstractions (Hough 2016, p. 6; Van Langendonck 2007, p. 185; Rahman 2016).

Names beyond the protagonist's family similarly contribute to the novel's intertextual texture. Figures such as *ʿAṭā Allāh* ("the gift of God") and *Madd Allāh* ("the extension of God's care") evoke theological associations that subtly infuse the narrative world with religious meaning. These onomastic choices function as semantic prompts rather than fixed allegories, situating characters within a shared symbolic tradition while preserving the openness of ethical interpretation.

4.1.4. Religious Terminology as Semantic Anchors

The novel systematically employs a wide range of religious terms—*hajj* (major Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca), *al-ʿarrāfūn* (soothsayers/diviners), and *Yawm al-Dīn* (the Day of Judgment)—which function as cultural–linguistic anchors. Scholars note that religious vocabulary in fiction often connects narrative events to collective memory and shared experience (Stewart 2021, p. 8; Muhammed and Al-Qazaz 2024, p. 86).

The reference to *hajj* evokes not only the spiritual journey to Mecca but also broader social–geographical associations shared across Muslim cultural contexts, where sacred travel is embedded in local and regional imaginaries (Luz 2020, pp. 3, 6). The term *al-ʿarrāfūn* invokes Islamic doctrinal prohibitions, adding satirical force while reinforcing the narrator's ethical framework. *Yawm al-Dīn* appears twice with distinct connotations—personal steadfastness and historical catastrophe—demonstrating what Stewart describes as the contextual variability of Qur'anic semantic fields in intertextual usage (Stewart 2021, pp. 2–3).

4.1.5. Scriptural Formulas as Psychological Frameworks

This section examines how recurrent scriptural formulas are systematically associated with moments of psychological strain, suggesting that religious language functions as a symbolic resource through which the protagonist negotiates vulnerability rather than as a deterministic psychological mechanism.

The incorporation of Qur'anic formulas such as *ḥasbunā Allāh wa niʿma al-wakīl* (Qur'an 3:173) exemplifies how sacred expressions function as emotional and ethical anchors within the narrative. Rather than appearing as decorative quotations, such formulas operate as active linguistic resources through which the protagonist negotiates moments of crisis, injustice, and vulnerability. A clear example occurs during Ahmad's interrogation, when he encounters deliberate indifference from a military officer:

مرّ بجاني عسكري. لم يكن ممكناً أن أعرف أنه ضابط أو جندي، لكن وقع خطواته الواثقة والهادئة دلّ على أنه ضابط. اقتربت خطواته مني. صار ممكناً أن أقول، أن أمارس حقي في الكلام، أو في السؤال؛ السؤال الأكثر من عادي. حين غلب على الظن أنه صار بجواري في وقفته الطويلة أنا وزميلي، هتفتُ بصوتٍ يحمل رجاءً مع احتجاج: «سيدي...». لكنه لم يعتبرنا أكثر من قمامة وتابع مسيره كما لو أنه لم يسمع شيئاً. فرفعتُ صوتي هذه المرة بغضب: «حسبي الله ونعم الوكيل». (ص. 77)

(A soldier passed beside me. I could not tell whether he was an officer or a soldier, but the confident calmness of his steps suggested he was an officer. He approached me, and it became possible for me to speak, to exercise my right to speak, or rather to ask the most ordinary of questions. When I thought he had stopped beside us, my colleague and me, I called out in a voice carrying both hope and protest: 'Sir...'. But he did not acknowledge us; he continued on his way as if he had heard nothing. This time, I raised my voice in anger: *ḥasbī Allāh wa niʿma al-wakīl*.) (p. 77)

In this scene, Ahmad utters the first-person form *ḥasbī Allāh wa niʿma al-wakīl* as an immediate response to the officer's disregard. The formula constitutes a narrative act of withdrawal from worldly dependence: the protagonist abandons the expectation of assistance from established authority and redirects his appeal toward God as the ultimate

guarantor of justice and deliverance. Within the logic of the scene, the utterance functions as more than pious speech; it becomes a stabilizing ethical resource that enables endurance and prevents psychological collapse under conditions of humiliation and powerlessness. This episode exemplifies how scriptural formulas function as psychological frameworks within *His Name Is Ahmad*. Religious language thus emerges as a contributor to inner regulation and moral orientation rather than a merely rhetorical embellishment. This interpretive claim is supported by findings in religious psychology indicating that, in Islamic contexts, a relationship with God grounded in obedience, appreciation, active service, and trust is associated with enhanced ethical resilience and moral stability (Mikani and Rasoolzadeh Tabatabaei 2021, p. 814).

Similarly, the Qur'anic verses Ahmad recalls throughout the novel, such as Qur'an 11:49, 3:200, and 39:10, extend beyond allusion to function as interpretive frameworks through which he understands suffering, perseverance, and moral steadfastness. Scholars describe this phenomenon as "textual piety," whereby sacred language operates as a cognitive and emotional resource embedded within narrative consciousness (Weinrich 2022). Through these scriptural formulas, the novel integrates devotional discourse directly into the protagonist's psychological landscape, reinforcing the ethical dynamic of endurance, trust, and spiritual composure. These linguistic patterns establish the groundwork for the narrative intertexts examined in the next section.

4.2. Narrative Intertextuality

Narrative intertextuality in *His Name Is Ahmad* emerges through the incorporation of religious and historical stories that the protagonist recalls, reinterprets, and reconfigures, embedding his personal experience within a broader sacred narrative tradition. These intertexts extend beyond embellishing the plot, functioning instead as interpretive frameworks that illuminate the protagonist's inner consciousness, moral formation, and spiritually grounded worldview. As Erll argues, literary texts are interpreted through culturally shared memory frameworks that enable readers to connect new narratives with familiar historical and symbolic repertoires (Erll 2011, pp. 151–53).

This dynamic becomes especially pronounced when events in Ahmad's life resonate with Qur'anic narrative patterns and prophetic biography. Al-Otoun deliberately structures several key episodes to parallel foundational accounts of hardship and redemption found in Islamic tradition. Ahmad's prolonged imprisonment, for example, evokes the Qur'anic story of Prophet Yusuf, whose unjust confinement and eventual vindication form one of the most culturally resonant narratives in Arab literary memory. Such parallels enrich the novel's symbolic texture and situate Ahmad's experience within a wider sacred narrative framework.

4.2.1. Prophetic Silence as Ethical Resistance

While the intertext with the story of Prophet Yusuf frames Ahmad's imprisonment within a paradigmatic narrative of unjust suffering and eventual vindication, religious intertextuality in the novel also operates at a more immediate level, guiding concrete ethical decisions in moments of familial and social confrontation.

In this study, ethical resistance refers to value-based dissent shaped through sacred discourse. The term moral resistance, used later in the analysis, describes the same phenomenon in its lived expression rather than a separate concept.

كانت بعض الأخبار عن فراري من الجيش قد تسربت إلى أهلي. على عادته تجهم أبي في وجهي، وأشاحت أُمي بوجهها إلى الجهة الأخرى، وصمت أخي باسم... واجهت أهلي كما واجه زكريا عشية المحراب قومه. صُمتُ عن (102). الكلام حتى الصباح. ونمت وكأن شيئاً لم يحدث.

(Some news of my desertion from the army had reached my family. As was his habit, my father frowned at me; my mother turned her face away, and my brother Basim fell silent. I faced my family as Zechariah faced his people on the eve of the sanctuary. I refrained from speaking until morning and slept as though nothing had happened.) (p. 102)

This episode offers a particularly revealing instance of narrative religious intertextuality. By explicitly aligning his silence with that of the Prophet Zechariah—“I faced my family as Zechariah faced his people on the eve of the sanctuary”—the narrator frames his response to familial reproach within a prophetic ethical model. In the Qur’anic narrative, Zechariah’s silence signifies neither passivity nor defeat but a divinely sanctioned strategy of wisdom and restraint. By adopting this scriptural posture, Ahmad transforms silence into a morally charged act. His refusal to justify himself verbally before his family mirrors his broader withdrawal from institutions he perceives as ethically compromised, including the military authority he has abandoned. Religious intertextuality thus provides a framework through which personal dissent is articulated without direct confrontation. Rather than engaging in overt political critique, the narrative invokes prophetic precedent to legitimize ethical resistance. This scene suggests the centrality of religious intertextuality.

Ahmad’s childhood, shaped by maternal expectation, religious guidance, and an early sense of moral purpose, also mirrors prophetic childhood narratives where extraordinary futures are foreshadowed through formative experiences. For instance, classical prophetic biographies often describe mothers or caregivers intuiting a child’s unusual destiny, whether through dreams, blessings, or moments of precocious behavior. Ahmad’s mother’s firm conviction in his future role echoes this motif of early familial recognition. These subtle resonances draw upon what Ababneh terms the “cultural memory” embedded in sacred storytelling, which authors activate to frame personal experience within archetypal moral trajectories (Ababneh 2024, p. 217).

Structurally, this moment generates a compelling narrative tension. Although Ahmad is a participating first-person narrator, whose position typically entails introspective disclosure, he chooses silence at a decisive moment, effectively suspending narration. Instead of recounting his plan directly, he redirects the reader toward the Qur’anic story itself, allowing intertextual knowledge to supply meaning. The narrative thus suspends the expected act of self-justification. Rather than speaking in his own defense, Ahmad allows silence itself to bear the ethical weight of the scene, transforming it from a thematic motif into a narrative device that reinforces the novel’s ethical vision. This technique confirms Stewart’s observation that Qur’anic allusion can transfer theological and emotional weight into literary narration (Stewart 2021, pp. 5–6).

At a further narrative level, religious intertextuality shifts from silence to the body, where ritual imagery reframes suffering within an ethical horizon.

4.2.2. Embodied Ritual and Ethical Critique

Beyond visionary and ethical intertexts, religious discourse appears in scenes of physical suffering, where bodily experience is interpreted through ritual memory. In such moments, pain becomes an important locus of ethical and symbolic meaning within the narrative—for example,

كان صوت أنفاس المصابين الأخيرة يصل إلى أذني، كأنه خوارٌ كباشٍ تُذبح صباح عيد الأضحى ذلك الصوت الذي لا ينسى.
(ص. 125)

(The sound of the injured men’s final breaths reached my ears, like the bleating of rams being slaughtered on the morning of Eid al-Adha. A sound that can never be forgotten.) (p. 125)

This passage offers one of the most striking instances of narrative religious intertextuality in *His Name Is Ahmad*, where bodily suffering is interpreted through the lens of ritual sacrifice. By likening the dying breaths of the wounded to the slaughter of rams on Eid al-Adha, the narrator draws on a deeply embedded ritual rooted in the Qur'anic commemoration of Abraham's trial. The allusion does not aestheticize violence; rather, it frames trauma within a sacred register that intensifies its emotional and ethical weight.

The reference to Eid al-Adha activates a collective sensory memory shared across Muslim cultures—sound, blood, sacrifice, and submission—thereby transforming a scene of medical horror into an embodied moral experience. As Aweida observes, such moments exemplify *embodied religious allusion*, where ritual imagery migrates from sacred practice into narrative consciousness, shaping affective response and ethical interpretation (Aweida 2025, pp. 34–36).

Importantly, this intertextual move carries clear political resonance. By aligning the suffering of anonymous victims with a ritual that signifies obedience and sacrificial submission to a higher authority, the narrative implicitly interrogates the cost of institutional violence and the bodies it consumes. Religious intertextuality thus functions not as devotional ornamentation but as a critical interpretive framework that exposes the human toll of authority, conflict, and state power. Here, sacred discourse operates decisively as a medium of ethical and political critique.

A similar intertextual gesture appears when the narrator describes his relief upon returning home from military service as akin to “a man who wandered the desert for forty years and then found his way” (102). The Biblical and Qur'anic story of the Israelites' forty-year wandering constitutes one of the most enduring narratives of trial, exile, and eventual deliverance. Invoking it to describe a personal moment of renewal shows how Al-Otoun situates individual experience within archetypal patterns of endurance and restoration. This reading aligns with Alkier's observations about how religious narrative forms often serve as “semantic templates”, shaping emotional and ethical trajectories in later texts (Alkier 2025, pp. 2–3).

Narrative intertextuality also appears in highly lyrical passages depicting the narrator's devotional experience. In one scene, he reflects as follows:

في السجود، سجد الكون معي كان يعبد الله كما لا نعبد... قليل من التماهي مع الطبيعة يكشف لك حبها الفطري للخالق. قمت فقامت الأشجار معي، ركعت فركعت معي الظلال، رفعت يدي إلى الله فرفعت الكائنات قبلي يديها شاكرة (207) على الوجه الذي يكون عليه الشكر الحق

(In prostration, the universe prostrated with me; it worshipped God in ways we do not... A slight merging with nature reveals its innate love for the Creator. I stood, and the trees stood with me; I bowed, and the shadows bowed with me; I raised my hands to God, and the creatures raised their hands before mine, offering gratitude in the way true gratitude is rendered...). (p. 207)

This passage illustrates a moment of profound identification between the narrator and the natural world, where cosmic elements are depicted as participating in the act of worship alongside him. Such imagery resonates with Qur'anic representations of universal glorification, where all creation engages in divine praise. The narrator's extended reflection is therefore not a digressive or ornamental interruption of narrative flow, but a deliberate introspective pause that reveals his inner spiritual disposition and psychological state.

At the same time, the passage shows how the narrator mobilizes his religious knowledge and cultural familiarity with Islamic cosmology to shape the narrative voice. Religious intertextuality thus functions as a strategic means of foregrounding doctrinal concepts and spiritual values, intensifying their narrative significance and directing the reader toward the text's embedded ethical and theological concerns.

These images echo Qur'anic descriptions of universal glorification, situating the protagonist's act of worship within a broader cosmological horizon. As Aweida (2025) observes, sacred narratives frequently employ rhythmic intertextual echoes to align individual devotion with the natural and cosmic order (pp. 3–4). Within this framework, the convergence of devotional and natural imagery intensifies both the spiritual depth and the esthetic resonance of the narrative.

The narrator employs narrative intertextuality to articulate a vision of Muslim womanhood rooted in Islamic ethical tradition. His reflections on the steadfastness of Fāṭimah and his mother, along with his evocation of figures such as Khadijah, Hind, and the mother of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, highlight women's formative role in cultivating resilience and moral clarity. Collectively, these instances reveal a broader trend in contemporary literature toward reactivating Islamic tradition through layered forms of religious intertextuality, as inherited sacred narratives are mobilized to deepen ethical meaning and situate personal experience within a wider cultural framework.

The narrator extends this trajectory through an intertextual retelling from Ibn Hishām's *Sirah* of the poetess Qutaylah bint al-Naḍr, who approached the Prophet—accompanied by Abū Bakr—reciting elegies for her father after he had been executed following the Battle of Badr (480). The Prophet's response—"Had I heard this before his execution, I would have granted him clemency"—is presented as evidence of his ethical responsiveness and capacity for mercy. Contemporary scholarship notes that women's poetic voices in early Islam often functioned as morally and politically consequential interventions (Stewart 2021, p. 8). The narrator's inclusion of lines from Qutaylah's lament illustrates his artistic integration of multiple genres—narrative prose, sacred history, and Arabic poetry—producing a refined textual hybridity consistent with intertextual esthetics (Stewart 2021, p. 10).

Narrative intertexts firmly anchor the protagonist within a continuum of Islamic leadership and virtue. Ahmad frequently invokes figures such as 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz, Khālīd ibn al-Walīd, 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ, and Bishr al-Hāfi. These references operate as culturally embedded ethical models that activate collective religious memory and actively align the protagonist's moral orientation with authoritative frameworks of Islamic history (Naimat et al. 2025, p. 211).

4.2.3. Scriptural Vision and the Ethics of Justice

Notably, Ahmad's position as prison librarian functions as a narrative prelude to his later ethical and visionary engagements with sacred discourse. His references to Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Sīrīn, and Ibn Kathīr situate him within the Islamic intellectual tradition of jurisprudence, dream interpretation, and Qur'anic exegesis. As Stewart observes, such engagement with Qur'anic discourse constitutes a form of "scripturalized literacy," whereby sacred texts become resources for ethical orientation and meaning-making (Stewart 2021, p. 7). This textual grounding prepares the narrative for moments in which scriptural knowledge crystallizes into lived moral vision, strikingly in the courtroom scene that follows:

بدأ القاضي بتلاوة القرار، كان القرار مكوناً من ثلاث وسبعين صفحة. في غمرة قراءته للقرار، جلسْتُ أتلو آيات من القرآن الكريم؛ كانت الآيات بلسماً مسح على كل الجروح السابقة. في منتصف سورة يونس، رأيْتُ الشيخ عبد الرزاق. كان يقف أمامي وقال لي: اتبعني. سألته: إلى أين؟ قال: ستذهب إلى قاضٍ عادل لا يُظلم عنده أحد. ثم غاب، ولم أعد أراه. (ص. 340)

(The judge began reading the verdict, which consisted of seventy-three pages. While he reads, I sat reciting verses from the Qur'an; the verses were like a balm soothing my previous wounds. Amid Surah Yūnus, I saw Shaykh 'Abd al-Razzāq standing before me. He said: 'Follow me.' I asked him, 'Where to?' He

replied, ‘You will go to a just judge who wrongs no one.’ Then he vanished, and I did not see him again.) (p. 340)

This courtroom scene suggests that religious intertextuality in *His Name Is Ahmad* operates not only as a source of spiritual consolation but also as a medium of ethical critique. As the military judge reads an extensive verdict, Ahmad turns inward to Qur’anic recitation, specifically from *Surah Yūnus*, which functions as a counter-discourse to judicial authority. The choice of this surah is significant, foregrounding prophetic experiences of trial, endurance, and divine judgment, implicitly aligning the protagonist’s situation with paradigmatic narratives of unjust persecution and moral steadfastness. Qur’anic recitation thus becomes a stabilizing framework through which Ahmad resists psychological erosion and reasserts moral coherence in the face of judicial power.

The visionary appearance of Shaykh ‘Abd al-Razzāq further intensifies this ethical dimension. His invitation to lead Ahmad to a “just judge who wrongs no one” establishes a symbolic contrast between fallible human justice and absolute divine justice. Within Islamic tradition, visionary encounters are often understood as vehicles of moral truth rather than literal events, and here the vision functions as an implicit indictment of the court’s ethical legitimacy. Through this layered intertextual structure combining Qur’anic recitation, prophetic symbolism, and visionary narrative, the novel mobilizes religious discourse as a mode of moral resistance. Rather than articulating overt political protest, the text situates its critique within a sacred ethical horizon, demonstrating how scriptural intertextuality exposes the moral limits of established authority while preserving the narrative’s spiritual and esthetic integrity.

This episode marks a culminating point in the novel’s narrative intertextuality, where sacred knowledge, ethical vision, and institutional critique converge. Here, religious intertexts are strategically mobilized to articulate an ethic of resistance, expose the ethical limits of institutional power, and embed political critique within a culturally authoritative framework. The scene exemplifies what El Shakry identifies as the Qur’an’s “intrinsically critical practice,” in which ethical vision and narrative form reveal institutional limits without overt ideological protest (El Shakry 2020, p. 15). In Bakhtin’s terms, Qur’anic recitation appears as an inner language of resistance rather than a doctrinal voice (Bakhtin 1981, pp. 342–43).

4.3. Discussion/Summary

The analyses presented in Sections 4.1 and 4.2 demonstrate that *His Name Is Ahmad* constructs its meaning through a systematic interaction between linguistic and narrative forms of religious intertextuality. At the linguistic level, the novel draws on Qur’anic diction, devotional vocabulary, sacred formulas, and theophoric naming to shape a religiously inflected narrative voice. These elements extend beyond marking Islamic cultural identity; they actively structure the protagonist’s inner life, guiding emotional response, ethical judgment, and modes of endurance under conditions of marginalization, coercion, and injustice. The analysis of chapter titles, naming practices, and scriptural formulas shows that religious language operates as an active narrative resource rather than a decorative layer. Qur’anic expressions and ritual terminology provide the semantic tools through which Ahmad interprets suffering, regulates fear, and maintains moral coherence. Linguistic intertextuality thus emerges as a mechanism of psychological stabilization and ethical orientation, enabling the narrative to articulate resilience and moral agency without overt ideological assertion.

At the narrative level, the novel embeds Ahmad’s experiences within recognizable sacred story patterns drawn from Qur’anic and Islamic tradition. Parallels with the stories of Prophet Yusuf, Prophet Zechariah, ritual sacrifice during Eid al-Adha, and visionary

encounters of divine justice systematically frame key moments—imprisonment, silence, bodily suffering, and judgment—within inherited models of trial, restraint, and ethical endurance. These narrative intertexts elevate the protagonist symbolically and render his experiences morally intelligible by situating them within culturally authoritative frameworks of meaning. Across these instances, the analysis demonstrates that religious intertextuality performs a dual function. It deepens the novel's symbolic density and emotional resonance by activating shared religious memory, while enabling forms of ethical critique that remain embedded within a sacred register. Institutional authority, military power, and judicial procedures are not confronted through explicit political rhetoric; rather, they are implicitly evaluated against higher moral standards articulated through scriptural precedent and ritual symbolism. Religious intertextuality thus operates as a mediating discourse through which resistance, critique, and moral refusal are articulated without relinquishing spiritual legitimacy.

5. Conclusions

This study shows that in *His Name Is Ahmad*, religious intertextuality functions as a central narrative strategy rather than simply a marker of piety or cultural inheritance. Through this intertextual framework, Al-Otoun constructs ethical judgment and articulates an implicit critique of authority. By integrating Qur'anic language, prophetic narratives, and ritual memory into both the linguistic texture and narrative structure of the novel, Al-Otoun transforms sacred discourse into an active ethical language that directly engages modern conditions of power, confinement, and moral pressure.

The findings further establish that religious intertextuality performs a *strategic* function: it provides an alternative moral vocabulary through which resistance is articulated without overt ideological confrontation. Qur'anic recitation, prophetic silence, and ritual imagery do not withdraw the narrative from political engagement; instead, they reframe critique within a sacred moral horizon that exposes the ethical limits of institutional authority while preserving cultural legitimacy and affective credibility. In this configuration, the novel illustrates how sacred language operates as a form of non-violent moral resistance embedded within narrative form.

By clarifying both *how* religious intertexts operate and *why* they are mobilized, this study advances scholarship on Arabic literature beyond descriptive accounts of religious reference toward a functional and ethically grounded analysis of intertextual practice. It also extends debates on narrative ethics by showing how religious discourse functions as an internally persuasive language that shapes judgment and critique from within the protagonist's consciousness rather than through external ideological positioning. Rather than merely cataloging religious references, this study argues that Qur'anic intertextuality in the novel operates as a structurally constitutive narrative mechanism.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings extend major models of intertextuality. While Bakhtin foregrounds the ethical internalization of authoritative discourse and Genette analyzes the formal relations of transtextuality, recent scholarship—most notably El Shakry's study of the Qur'an as a literary and ethical resource—emphasizes the critical potential of sacred language in modern narrative. In this light, Qur'anic discourse in *His Name Is Ahmad* emerges as a formal intertextual device, an ethical language, and a culturally grounded mode of critique, thereby extending intertextual theory into the context of contemporary Arabic fiction.

More broadly, the present findings invite a reconsideration of religious intertextuality as a dynamic narrative practice rather than a residual cultural inheritance. Beyond Al-Otoun's work, this perspective offers a productive framework for examining how con-

temporary Arabic fiction recontextualizes sacred discourse to negotiate ethical, political, and cultural questions while generating new forms of literary expression.

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